

W-01580A-13-0255

ORIGINAL



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ARIZONA CORPORATION COMMI
UTILITY COMPLAINT FORM**Investigator:** Richard Martinez**Phone:**

2013 AUG 19 P 2:46

Fax:**Priority:** Respond Within Five DaysARIZONA CORPORATION COMMISSION
DOCKET CONTROL**Opinion** **No.** 2013 - 112316**Date:** 8/19/2013**Complaint Description:** 08A Rate Case Items - Opposed
N/A Not Applicable**First:****Last:****Complaint By:** Kendra

Garrett

Account Name: Kendra Garrett**Home:****Street:****Work:****City:** Payson**CBR:****State:** AZ Zip: 85541**Is:****Utility Company:** Tonto Village Water Company, Inc.

Arizona Corporation Commission

Division: Water

DOCKETED

Contact Name:**Contact Phone:****Nature of Complaint:**

Docket No. W-01580-13-0255



Dear Commissioners,

I am writing to express my frustrations regarding the service and practices of Tonto Village Water Company (TVWC) and my utter disbelief at the magnitude of the rate increase being requested. I urge you to hold a hearing and deny all but a small increase of less than \$2.00 per customer in the monthly rate to allow TVWC to recover their operating loss of \$3,480.00 experienced in the test year 2011.

The requested increase in the usage charges is certainly not justified based on the lax attitude TVWC demonstrates about the loss of water and their slow repair of water main breaks. Additionally residents have been no information about system overloads, water shortages or aquifer depletion. This lack of discussion of any of these topics leads me to the conclusion that the rate structure in place at this time is doing the job of having residents practice conservation of and have respect for our water resources.

When TVWC was sold to a private party the new owners promised that they would immediately embark on a 5 year plan to replace the poor, leaking water lines in Tonto Village I & II, install a generator to keep the water system running during power outages, be proactive in informing residents regarding scheduled outages regardless of length, and operate the system in a manner protective of the health of residents. We were hopeful that our situation would improve under new management.

None of these promises have been kept. There has been no action on the line replacement and no generator has been installed - and we have been told nothing regarding either of these promises.

The promise of informing residents of water outages has not come true in any type of organized fashion. Sometime we hear but most times we do not. Notice is normally received when no water comes out of the faucet. It is difficult to take care of my family when the water is not available and I have no time to prepare or

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plan for the outage. When asked the owners respond "Well I told so-and -so. Didn't they call you?" or "We are not required to tell you about outages unless they will be longer than 4 hours." This is not customer service and definitely not caring about the residents.

In addition to the above noted issues and concerns we have had several significant encounters with TVWC. Our experiences with TVWC are as follows:

1. Around February to March of 2012 my husband discovered a water pond in our back yard near the meter. It was fairly large and ran under our fence to three of our neighbors meters. After investigating all the meters it was not possible to isolate the leak to any one of the four meters so we called TVWC. We were told that due to limited access to our back yard the pipes would have to be uncovered by hand, that TVWC could not get to it for some time and that if it was found to be on our side of the meter we would be billed for the digging charges.

Because our concern for loosing water, the lack of urgency by TVWC and our inability to pay the water company to hire anyone to dig, my husband and I decided to dug up and find the leak. By the way he is 69 years old, has two replaced knees and has had a heart attack in recent years. I am 68 and have the usual aches and pains of aging body.

My husband started by opening a hole about 6x6 and 1 1/2 ' deep in the sticky slippery clay and created a ditch to take the leaking water to the other side of our lot on the first day. Then I went out for three to four hours per day for the next week and made the hole deeper. On the next weekend my husband dug the hold down to 4' or so, making it wider an improving the runoff ditch. He borrowed a pump to bail the water out and looked for the leak as he kept digging. He did not find the leak in that weekend so I continued to dig and expand for my three to four hours or so hours each day for the next week with no luck.

The next weekend my husband found the leak. It was on the water company's side of the meter so we notified TVWC. We were told that they would not be able to fix it for some time and that they were not concerned about the loss of water as "it didn't cost them anything": The leak ran for three or four weeks or more before TVWC was to fix it. The pit remained open for the entire time.

Our guess is that the leak was running at about the volume of a half-on hose. We ran the full-on faucet into a 5 gallon bucket and it filled in about 1 minute. From that we estimated that the leak flow was about 2 gallons per minute or 2,880 gallons per day. Our water consumption for a winter month is slightly over 3,000 gallons. This leak wasted 4+ years of in-home water usage for our house.

On my daily walk in the village I observe water main repairs being conducted in much the same manner as the one I have just described. Ours is not an isolated situation

2. We offered for TVWC to install a clean out in the line for the purpose of flushing after repairs. As there was a huge hole around the line we felt that it would be the perfect time. We stated that we did not mind having the wet mess and that there would be a real health benefit for TVWC to be able to flush the lines after the repair. TVWC declined and does not, to the best of my knowledge, flush the water mains anywhere after a repair or power outage when sewage effluent is sucked into the lines through small holes.

3. In January 2013 our hot water heater ruptured and we had quite a water loss. We minimized the loss as much as possible but still had a bill for nearly \$60 for January's usage. In March 2013 we received a bill for over 40,000 gallons of usage for February-\$114 vs the \$16 or \$17 we were expecting. We read the meter and found that the reading was probably correct but was just not possible. On calling TVWC we were told that the readings were correct and "gosh we thought it was high". They did not however call us and ask what was going on or give us a heads up in any way. We did find a leak in the supply line to our house and repaired it as fast as we could dig.

WE WERE VERY DISAPPOINTED THAT TVWC DID NOT CARE THAT WE HAD A 40,000 GALLON USAGE IN THE DEAD OF WINTER AND TOOK NO ACTION TO DETERMINE THE CAUSE OF AN UNUSUAL, HIGH

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USAGE.

4. One day in the fall of 2011 we awoke to find that our water was mud brown. The toilet back and bowl were dark for many flushes and the bathtub had clay, sand and who-knows-what in it as well. Rather than ask TVWC to investigate we used sterile sample bottles my husband has for work, took a proper sample, arranged with the Tonto Village Water Improvement District to have the sample tested and my husband delivered the sample to a lab in the valley within 3 hours. The sample turned out to be positive for fecal coliform. We called ADEQ and they gave us instructions for protecting ourselves. When we called TVWC they chastised us for not calling them and attempted to discredit my husband's sample talking and transported methods. The lab confirmed that his procedure was correct and his sample result was valid. TVWC did take another sample one day after the results were received. This sample showed no fecal pollution. No main line flushing was conducted by TVWC nor were we given any directions from TVWC as to proper procedures for cleaning our water lines and water heater.

5. We quite often find a white "goo" that settles out of the water and covers the bottoms of glasses and pans. We have not been able to determine what the "goo" is or what conditions lead to its occurrence. Its presence is disturbing and lead us to purchase drinking water weekly.

6. The water we receive is very hard and produces heavy calcification on all faucets. I suspect that his condition is beyond TVWC's responsibility. If not they should be instructed to correct the problem in the water they deliver to residents.

7. When we receive the written notice of this rate increase my husband remarked that it was about time to receive an annual Consumer Confidence Report. He could not remember receiving one recently. He could not believe that it was a request for a rate increase and that no Consumer Confidence Report has been received for many years, probably since shortly after new ownership of TVWC. The former owners sent one annually saying that it was required. Just this week we got our water bill and happened to notice on the back side of the post card directing us to the reports that are posted on all well sites or can be obtained by supplying a self addressed envelope with proper postage to TVWC.

THIS IS ONE OF MANY EXAMPLES OF DOING THE ABSOLUTE MINIMUM TO GET BY. IT IS ALSO A GLARING EXAMPLE OF THE DISREGARD TVWC HAS FOR THE HEALTH AND WATER QUALITY CONCERNS WE AND THE RESIDENTS ARE EXPRESSING TO TVWC AT EVERY OPPORTUNITY.

These experiences have resulted in my recommendation that the ACC only grant TVWC a small increase of less than \$2.00 per customer in the monthly rate to allow TVWC to recover their operating loss experienced in the test year 2011. Further I request that the ACC deny the requested increase in the usage charges based on TVWC's actions regarding the loss of water through water main breaks and the lack of evidence of usage by any residents beyond normal for a community of our type.

Sincerely,

Kendra Garrett

(*****THIS WAS EMAILED TO THE COMPANY TO ANSWER THE CUSTOMER'S CONCERNS AS DESCRIBED WITHIN CUSTOMER'S OPINION AGAINST THIS PROPOSED RATE INCREASE AS STATED ABOVE*****)

End of Complaint

Utilities' Response:

Investigator's Comments and Disposition:

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8/19

Emailed to Phoenix ACC office for docketing.

FILE CLOSED.

End of Comments

Date Completed: 8/19/2013

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